



## RCGP Response to Senedd Committee Consultation on Anti-Racist Action Plan

### Introduction

RCGP Cymru Wales understands that the Anti-Racist Action Plan (the Plan) is, at the time of writing, in the data gathering phase.

RCGP Cymru Wales supports the principle of creating an anti-racist Wales. We are encouraged by the emphasis on health inequalities in the Plan and the attention the Plan pays to access, data and representation in the workforce.

We would ask the Committee to on call the Welsh Government to also give due attention to the quality of care which is received by Black, Asian and ethnic minority people, as well the experience of staff working in health care settings generally and in primary care in particular.

### Progress since 2022

Members inform RCGP Cymru Wales that implementation of the Plan is in the insight gathering phase. We have had sight of documentation from the Workforce Race Equality Standard Steering Group's July 2023 meeting and welcome collaboration between NHS Wales, Social Care Wales and Welsh Government to paint an accurate picture of the make-up of the workforce and problems faced by different groups.

RCGP Cymru Wales is advised that, while equality and diversity data is available within these institutions, it is often not granular enough to give meaningful answers. We look forward to seeing data and insight which will be gathered by the Steering Group.

We also note that while NHS institutions are using the language of an Anti-Racist Wales, we do not see this being put to the public in Wales, who may not have access to what is happening in the public and corporate sectors.

### Access to services

As in our response to Health and Social Care Committee's enquiry on mental health inequalities, those from black, Asian, and minority ethnic groups are less likely to seek help for mental health issues.<sup>1</sup>

This anti-racist plan itself offers explanations as to why those from black, Asian and ethnic minority groups may be unlikely to access health care services, or to feel excluded from the same:

"In 2020 the Office for National Statistics published data showing that the risk of death involving COVID-19 among some ethnic groups in England and Wales has been significantly higher than that of those of white ethnicity. Largely due to socio-economic factors, geographical location and other circumstances, but these factors do not account for the entire disparity.

In 2019 11.2% of healthcare workers in Wales were black, Asian and minority ethnic. While in 2017 the Traveller Movement conducted a survey, the results of which stated that 30% of respondents experienced discrimination in relation to accessing health care. (The Traveller Movement, 2017).

Evidence suggests women from black ethnic backgrounds are 4 times more likely to die in childbirth, while the rate is twice as high for Asian women when compared to white women. (Knight M, et al., 2021). "

We note that the Plan proposes improved access to maternity support programmes through the Maternity and Neonatal Safety Support Programme, as well as aims to improve access generally. We would call for the Welsh Government to propose schemes similar to the aforementioned for maternity to other specific services such as mental health.

### **Anti-Racism and Relationship-based care**

RCGP Cymru Wales feels that coupling the initiatives in the Plan with a relationship-based approach to primary care would help to foster an environment where all patients are included. As published in our report Fit for the Future: Relationship Based Care, patients who know and are known to their GP are more likely to seek help from that GP rather than attend emergency care or wait until 'crisis point'.<sup>2</sup>

Our report states the importance of fostering a compassionate and interested approach from medical school onwards: "embedding relationship-based care within medical school curricula and GP specialty training will also help to attract trainees who are as interested

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<sup>1</sup> RCGP Response to Health and Social Care Committee enquiry into Mental Health Inequalities, June 2022

<sup>2</sup> RCGP Fit for the Future: Relationship based care 2022 [Relationship-based care \(rcgp.org.uk\)](https://www.rcgp.org.uk)

in people as they are diseases."<sup>3</sup> This goes hand in hand with ensuring a workforce who treat all patients according to their own needs.

### **Vulnerable groups**

RCGP Cymru Wales notes concerns brought to the attention of the committee regarding vulnerable people who come from ethnic minority backgrounds.

While it is crucially important to the success and wellbeing of the people of Wales to deal with the problem of racism it is also important to note practical issues faced by people from ethnic minority backgrounds such as the language barrier.

Women from ethnic minority groups who do not have English or Welsh as their first language often struggle with the language barrier, due to unequal gender dynamics in many countries<sup>4</sup>. Members report that women who present at the GP, due to time constraints, have no other option but to use a family member, including children to translate very personal information.

Our members report that this can cause delays in patient care due to incorrect translation, embarrassment, or even deliberate mistranslation on the part of the relative. An acceptance of professional translation services for other languages and consideration for how to encourage education in English or Welsh for women is an important part of ensuring inclusion in health services across Wales.

### **Support for staff experiencing or witnessing racism**

In addition to the provisions of the Anti-Racist Action Plan, our members wish to bolster existing procedures for dealing with workplace bullying in health care setting to ensure they properly deal with racism. We ask that existing means of reporting these behaviours are reviewed to ensure they are fit for purpose.

Members have also commented that there must be a confidential and reliable place to report racist behaviours among staff members. We ask the committee to call for Active Bystander training to be made compulsory to all healthcare professionals across Wales, so that colleagues who are not from black, Asian, and ethnic minority backgrounds can support colleagues who face racism in the workplace.

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<sup>3</sup> RCGP Fit for the Future: Relationship based care 2022 [Relationship-based care \(rcgp.org.uk\)](https://www.rcgp.org.uk)

<sup>4</sup> Bernhard, S *Journal of Refugee Studies*, Volume 35, Issue 1, March 2022, Pages 282–309